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THESE TIMES

By LOUIS UNTERMEYER

First Love

Challenge

"—— and Other Poets"

Heinrich Heine: Three Hundred and Twenty-five Poems

THESE TIMES

BY

LOUIS UNTERMEYER

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1917

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To

ROBERT FROST

POET AND PERSON

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THESE TIMES:

" This is my hour, the sum of tireless ages;
These times are those for which all Time prepared.
And as I come, the old accounts are squared;
Creation smiles, accepting me as wages.
Not to make good the dream of fools and sages,
A pat millennium, a world ensnared;
But with great boasts that none has ever dared,
I come: a challenge hurled at creeds and cages.

" This is my hour, mine these arrogant days.
This rushing insolence, this vehement blaze
Sweeps through me as the sea sweeps through a breaker.
Intolerant of custom and control,
Aroused more for the contest than the goal,
I am thrown forth, a menace—and a maker."

THE WAVE

SWIMMERS

I took the crazy short-cut to the bay;
Over a fence or two and through a hedge,
Jumping a private road, along the edge
Of backyards full of drying wash it lay.
I ran, electric with elation,
Sweating, impetuous and wild
For a swift plunge in the sea that smiled,
Quiet and luring, half a mile away.
This was the final thrill, the last sensation
That capped four hours of violence and laughter:
To have, with casual friends and casual jokes,
Hard sport, a cold swim and fresh linen after . . .
And now, the last set being played and over,
I hurried past the ruddy lakes of clover;
I swung my racket at astonished oaks,
My arm still tingling from aggressive strokes.

Tennis was over for the day—
I took the leaping short-cut to the bay.

Then the swift plunge into the cool, green dark—
The windy waters rushing past me, through me;
Filled with a sense of some heroic lark,
Exulting in a vigor clean and roomy.
Swiftly I rose to meet the feline sea
That sprang upon me with a hundred claws,
And grappled, pulled me down and played with me.
Then, tense and breathless in the tightening pause
When one wave grows into a toppling acre,
I dived headlong into the foremost breaker;
Pitting against a cold and turbulent strife
The feverish intensity of life. . .
Out of the foam I lurched and rode the wave,
Swimming, hand over hand, against the wind;
I felt the sea's vain pounding, and I grinned
Knowing I was its master, not its slave.
Oh, the proud total of those lusty hours—

The give and take of rough and vigorous tussles
With happy sinews and rejoicing muscles;
The knowledge of my own miraculous powers,
Feeling the force in one small body bent
To curb and tame this towering element. . .

Back on the curving beach I stood again,
Facing the bath-house, when a group of men,
Stumbling beneath some sort of weight, went by.
I could not see the hidden thing they carried;
I only heard: "He never gave a cry—"
"Who's going to tell her?—" "Yes, and they just married—"
"Such a good swimmer, too" . . . and then they passed;
Leaving the silence throbbing and aghast.

A moment there my buoyant heart hung slack,
And then the glad, barbaric blood came back
Singing a livelier tune; and in my pulse
Beat the great wave that surges and exults . . .

Why I was there and whither I must go
I did not care. Enough for me to know
The same unresting struggle and the glowing
Beauty of spendthrift hours, bravely showing
Life, an adventure perilous and gay;
And Death, a long and vivid holiday.

FAITH

WHAT are we bound for? What's the yield
  Of all this energy and waste?
Why do we spend ourselves and build
    With such an empty haste?

Wherefore the bravery we boast?
  How can we spend one laughing breath
When at the end all things are lost
    In ignorance and death? . . .

The stars have found a blazing course
  In a vast curve that cuts through space;
Enough for us to feel that force
    Swinging us through the days.

Enough that we have strength to sing
  And fight and somehow scorn the grave;
That Life's too bold and bright a thing
    To question or to save.

ON THE PALISADES

And still we climbed
Upward into those sheer and threatening cliffs,
Storming against the sky.
As though to stop our impudent assault,
The sun laid great hot hands upon our backs,
And bent them down.
There were no bluff, good-humored winds to push us on;
There were no shrubs to grasp, no staff to aid—
Laughter was all we leaned on. . .

We dared not turn to view the dizzy depth—and then,
At last the height! . . . and the long climb over.
And, laughing still, we drew long, panting breaths;
And our pulses jumped with a proud and foolish thrill,

As though we had gained not merely the top
of a hill,
But a victory.

Up here, the gaunt earth seemed to sprawl,
Stretching its legs beyond the cramping skies,
And lie upon its cloudy back, and yawn. . .
Rhythmical breezes arose,
Like a strong man waking from sleep;
Like the measured breathing of day.
And the earth stirred and called us. . .
An unseen path sprang from the undergrowth,
And dodged among the bushes lightly, beckoning us on.
Vine-snares and rocks made way for us;
Daisies threw themselves before our feet;
The eager little armies of the grass,
Waving their happy spears, ran on beside us;
And when we slackened, when we thought of resting,
The running grasses stopped, the earth sank back into itself,
Became a living pillow, a soft breast,

And every branch held out its comforting
arms. . .
The winds pressed close, and, growing gentle,
sang to us;
And so we sat beneath the mothering trees.

Languor leaned down
And, whispering peace, drew us into ourselves.
And in the drowsy sunlight
We mused, escaping from the clanging world;
Happy to sink in visions and soft fantasies
For solace—and for strength;
To dip into a dream, as into sleep,
And wring new ardor from it, and rise re-
freshed;
Irradiant, held by no soothing past,
Blundering brightly on.

Then, in an unseen flash,
The air was sharp with energy again;
The afternoon tingled and snapped, electric
with laughter.
And he, our friend and lover, our buoyant,
swaggering boy,—

His soul as fiery as his flaming hair,—
Began to sing this snatch of ancient rhyme
Caught from the pickers in the cotton-fields:

" Lord, He thought He'd make a man,
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
Made him out er earth an' a han'ful er san'.
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)

" I know it; indeed, I know it, brudders;
I know it. Dese bones gwine ter rise again.

" Thought He'd make an 'umman too;
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
Didn't know 'zackly what ter do.
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)

" Tuk one rib fum Adam's side,
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
Made Miss Eve fer to be his bride.
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)"

Five hundred feet below us lay the world—
The Sunday-colored crowds busy at play,

The children, the tawdry lovers, and the far-off
tremor of ships,
Came to us, caught us out of the blurring vast-
ness,
As things remembered from dreams. . . .
And still he sang, while we joined in with child-
like mirth
The deep, infectious music of a childlike race.

" Sot 'em in a gyarden rich an' fair;
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
Tol' 'em dey could eat watever wuz dere.
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)

" Fum one tree you mus' not eat;
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
Ef you do, you'll have ter skeet!
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)

" Sarpint woun' him roun' er trunk;
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
At Miss Eve his eye he wunk.
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)

"I know it; indeed, I know it, brudders;
I know it—"

Like a blue snake uncoiled,
The lazy river, stretching between the banks,
Smoothed out its rippling folds, splotchy with sunlight,
And slept again, basking in silence.
A sea-gull chattered stridently;
We heard, breaking the rhythms of the song,
The cough of the asthmatic motor-boat
Spluttering toward the pier. . . .
And stillness again.

"Lord, He come wid a 'ponstrous voice;
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
Shook dis whole earth to its joists,
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)

"'Adam, Adam, war' art thou?'
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)
'Yas, good Lord, I's a-comin' now'
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)

"'Stole my apples, I believe—'
(Dese bone gwine ter rise again.)
'No, Marse Lord, I 'speck 'twas Eve'
(Dese bones gwine ter rise again.)"

The little boat drew nearer toward the land,
Still puffing like a wheezy runner out of breath.
And we could see, crowding its narrow decks,
The little human midges—remote and so unhuman;
Seeming to belong less to life than the fearless ants
That swarmed upon the remnants of our lunch,
Heedless of all the gods on whom they casually dared to climb.
So far the people seemed! . . .
And still a faint stirring reached us;
A thin thread of music flung its airy filaments toward heaven,
Where we, the happy deities, sat enthroned.
Straining our ears we caught the slender tone,
"Darling, I am growing old; silver threads among—"
And then it broke. . .

And over us rushed the warm flood of the
human need.
Out of that frayed, cheap song something
thrust out
And gripped us like a warm and powerful
hand.
No longer olympian, aloof upon our solemn
eminence,
We crumbled on our heights and yearned to
them.
The very distance had a chill for us.—
What if, of a sudden, the boat should topple
and plunge;
And there should rise a confused crying of peo-
ple, and the faint high voice of a child;
And heads should bob in the water, and sink
like rotten corks—
And we, up here so helpless,
Unhuman and remote. . .

A twilight mist stole up the bay;
In a nearby clump a young screech-owl wailed;
A breeze blew strangely cold, and, with a covert
haste,

We gathered up our things, whistled a breath
too loud,
And took the path down to the earth we
knew—
The earth we knew, the dear and casual world
Of sleep that followed struggle, struggle that
called from sleep—
The harsh, beloved, immortal invitation.

And, as we walked, the song sprang up again;
And, as we sang, the words took on new
power and majesty;
The dying sun became a part of them,
Gathering his fires in one last singing beam,
In one bright, lyric death.
The skies caught up the chorus, thundering it
back
From every cranny of the windy heavens;
And, rising from the rocks and silent waters,
Hailing the happy energy as its own,
The flood of life laughed with that gay convic-
tion:
I know it. Indeed I know it, brothers;
I know it! These bones will rise again. . .

Lulled by no soft and easy dreams,
Out of the crowded agonies of birth on birth,
Refreshed and radiant,
These bones will rise.
Out of the very arms of cradling Death,
These bones!

TO THE CHILD OF A REVOLUTIONIST

(Charles Epstein, April 1, 1915)

CHILD, you were born with fighting in your blood,
Your first breath was a struggle, sharp and swift;
Yet from the tumult and the darkening flood,
Child, you must lift.

Splendid it is to hurl against the strong
Bulwarks of ignorance a stronger stuff;
Splendid to challenge prejudice and wrong—
But not enough.

Yes, when your angry faith defeats the foe;
And, when the last, deep, thundering growl is stilled,
With the same arms that stabbed and brought them low,
Child, you must build!

Yet you shall hear the soundless bugles call;
And there shall be fresh wars and no release.
And you shall fight the hardest fight of all—
Even in peace.

There shall be little rest and great delight;
And, struggling still, your banner shall ascend,
Battling for beauty—that exalted fight
Which has no end.

MAGIC

We passed old farmer Boothby in the field.
Rugged and straight he stood; his body steeled
With stubbornness and age. We met his eyes
That never flinched or turned to compromise,
And "Luck," he cried, "good luck!"—and waved an arm,
Knotted and sailor-like, such as no farm
In all of Maine could boast of; and away
He turned again to pitch his new-cut hay. . .
We walked on leisurely until a bend
Showed him once more, now working toward the end
Of one great path; wearing his eighty years
Like banners lifted in a wind of cheers.

Then we turned off abruptly—took the road
Cutting the village, the one with the commanding

View of the river. And we strode
More briskly now to the long pier that showed
Where the frail boats were kept at Indian Landing.
In the canoe we stepped; our paddles dipped
Leisurely downwards, and the slim bark slipped
More on than in the water. Smoothly then
We shot its nose against the rippling current,
Feeling the rising river's half-deterrent
Pull on the paddle as we turned the blade
To keep from swerving round; while we delayed
To watch the curious wave-eaten locks;
Or pass, with lazy turns, the picnic-rocks. . . .
Blue eels flew under us, and fishes darted
A thousand ways; the once broad channel shrunk.
And over us the wise and noble-hearted
Twilight leaned down; the sunset mists were parted,—
And we, with thoughts on tiptoe, slunk
Down the green, twisting alleys of the Kennebunk.

Motionless in the meadows
The trees, the rocks, the cows. . .
And quiet dripped from the shadows
Like rain from heavy boughs.

The tree-toads started ringing
Their ceaseless silver bells;
A land-locked breeze came swinging
Its censer of earthy smells.

The river's tiny cañon
Stretched into dusky lands;
Like a dark and silent companion
Evening held out her hands.

Hushed were the dawn's bravados;
Loud noon was a silenced cry—
And quiet slipped from the shadows
As stars slip out of the sky. . .

It must have been an hour more, or later,
When, tramping homeward through the piney wood,

We felt the years fly back; the brotherhood
Of forests took us—and we saw the satyr!
There in a pool, up to his neck, he stood
And grinned to see us stare, incredulous—
Too startled to remember fear or flight.
Feeling the menace in the crafty night,
We turned to run—when lo, he called to us!
Using our very names he called. We drew
With creaking courage down the avenue
Of birches till we saw, with clearing sight,
(No longer through a tricky, pale-green light)
Familiar turns and shrubs, the friendly path,—
And Farmer Boothby in his woodland bath!
The woods became his background; every tree
Seemed part of him, and stood erect, and shared
The beauty of that gnarled serenity;
The quiet vigor of age that smiled and squared
Its shoulders against Time . . . And even night
Flowed in and out of him, as though content
With such a native element;
Happy to move about a spirit quite
As old, as placid and as confident . . .

Sideways we turned. Still glistening and unclad
He leaped up on the bank, light as a lad,
His body in the moonlight dripping stars. . .

We went on homeward, through the pasture-bars.

HIGHMOUNT

Hills, you have answered the craving
That spurred me to come;
You have opened your deep blue bosom
And taken me home.

The sea had filled me with the stress
Of its own restlessness;
My voice was in that angry roll
Of passion beating upon the world.
The ground beneath me shifted; I was swirled
In an implacable flood that howled to see
Its breakers rising in me,
A torrent rushing through my soul
And tearing things free
I could not control.
A monstrous impatience, a stubborn and vain
Repetition of madness and longing, of question and pain,
Driving me up to the brow of this hill—
Calling and questioning still.

And you—you smile
In ordered calm;
You wrap yourself in cloudy contemplation
while
The winds go shouting their heroic psalm,
The streams press lovingly about your feet
And trees, like birds escaping from the heat,
Sit in great flocks and fold their broad green
wings. . .
A cow bell rings
Like a sound blurred by sleep,
Giving the silence a rhythm
That makes it twice as deep. . .
Somewhere a farm-hand sings. . .

And here you stand
Breasting the elemental sea,
And put forth an invisible hand
To comfort me.
Rooted in quiet confidence, you rise
Above the frantic and assailing years;
Your silent faith is louder than the cries;
The shattering fears
Break and subside when they encounter you.

You know their doubts, the desperate questions—
And the answers too.

Hills, you are strong; and my burdens
Are scattered like foam.
You have opened your deep, blue bosom
And taken me home.

IMMORTAL

DEATH cannot keep me; even when the dry
  Earth holds me warm, a rose-bush at my
    head.
I shall not be content to loaf and lie
  Inactive in that strait and slothful bed.

For soon the happy restlessness of life
  Shall pierce me, stir me, make me once again
Part of the vigor and the freshening strife,
  Raised by the miracles of sun and rain.

And when at length the grudging winters pass,
  Endowed with swift and splendid liberty,
I shall go forth in rich and sturdy grass;
  Shall scent the clover, call the thirsting bee.

I shall be in the urge that bursts the pod,
  Pushing the sap along the stiffening tree;
That gives the young branch leaves, that stabs
    the sod. . .
  The rose shall bloom more proudly—bearing
    me.

All things shall feel and drink me unawares;
  The scattering winds, the root that twists
    and strives;
The ant, the forest—all that builds and dares.
  And I shall live not one, but countless lives.

TO A WEEPING WILLOW

You hypocrite!
You sly deceiver!
I have watched you fold your hands and sit
With your head bowed the slightest bit,
And your body bending and swaying
As though you were praying
Like a devout and rapt believer.
You knew that folks were looking and you were
Quite pleased with the effect of it.
Your over-mournful mien;
Your meek and almost languid stir;
Your widow's weeds of trailing green.
Wearing a grief in resignation clad,
You seemed so chastely, delicately sad.

You bold, young hypocrite—
I know you now!
Last night when every light was out,

I saw you wave one beckoning bough
And, with a swift and passionate shout,
The storm sprang up—and you, you exquisite,
You laughed a welcome to that savage lout. . .
I heard the thunder of his heavy boots.
And then in that dark, rushing weather,
You clung together;
Safe, with your secret in the night's great cover,
You and your lover.
I saw his windy fingers in your hair;
I saw you tremble and try to tear
Free from your roots
In a headlong rush to him.
His face was dim.
But I could hear his kisses in the rain;
And I could see your arms clasp and unclasp.
His rough, impetuous grasp
Shook you and you let fall
Your torn and futile weeds, or flung them all
Joyfully in the air,
As if they were
Triumphant flags, to sing above
The stark and shameless victory of love!

"STILL LIFE"

(For Lee Simonson)

A BOWL of fruit upon a piece of silk:—
Stiff pears and awkward apples, with the leaves
A crude and evil-tempered sort of green.
Harsh reds and screaming yellows, brilliant blacks,
Savagely massed, with strong and angry skill,
Against a furious, orange-colored cloth.
A canvas rioting with love and hate;
Colors that grappled, snarled and lashed the soul. . .
Never have I beheld such fierce contempt,
Nor heard a voice so full of vehement life
As this that shouted from a bowl of fruit,
High-pitched, malignant, lusty and perverse—
Brutal with a triumphant restlessness
And joy that cannot heal but laughs and stabs. . .

I never knew the man that did this thing,
This bowl of fruit upon a piece of silk;
And yet I know him better than I know my
friends.

BEAUTY

You shall not lead me, Beauty—
No, on no more passionate and never-ending
quests.
I am tired of stumbling after you,
Through wild, familiar forests and strange
bogs;
Tired of breaking my heart following a shift-
ing light.

Beauty, you shall fly before me no longer;
Smiling and looking back over your shoulder,
Wanton, trickster, trifler with weak men;
Demanding all and giving nothing in return
But furious dreams and shattering visions.

Beauty, I shall have you—
Not in imagination only, but in the flesh.
You will pursue me with untiring breath,
You will press by my side wherever I go.

Even in the muddy squalor and the thick welter
of ugliness
You shall run to me and put your arms about
me and cling to me;
And, try as I will, you will never be shaken off.

Beauty, I know you now—
And knowing, I will thirst for you no longer.
For I shall run on recklessly
And you will follow after!

A SIDE STREET

On the warm Sunday afternoons
And every evening in the Spring and Summer
When the night hurries the late home-comer
And the air grows softer, and scraps of tunes
Float from the open windows and jar
Against the voices of children and the hum
of a car;
When the city noises commingle and melt
With a restless something half-seen, half-felt—
I see them always there,
Upon the low, smooth wall before the church;
That row of little girls who sit and stare
Like sparrows on a granite perch.
They come in twittering couples or walk alone
To their gray bough of stone,
Sometimes by twos and threes, sometimes as
many as five—
But always they sit there on the narrow coping
Bright-eyed and solemn, scarcely hoping

To see more than what is merely moving and
alive. . .
They hear the couples pass; the lisp of happy
feet
Increases and the night grows suddenly
sweet. . .

Before the quiet church that smells of death
They sit.
And Life sweeps past them with a rushing
breath
And reaches out and plucks them by the hand
And calls them boldly, whispering to each
In some strange speech
They tremble to but cannot understand.
It thrills and troubles them, as one by one,
The days run off like water through a sieve;
While, with a gaze as candid as the sun,
Poignant and puzzled and inquisitive,
They come and sit,—
A part of life and yet apart from it.

A MAN

(For My Father)

I LISTENED to them talking, talking,
That tableful of keen and clever folk,
Sputtering . . . followed by a pale and balking
Sort of flash whenever some one spoke;
Like musty fireworks or a pointless joke,
Followed by a pointless, musty laughter. Then
Without a pause, the sputtering once again. . .
The air was thick with epigrams and smoke;
And underneath it all
It seemed that furtive things began to crawl,
Hissing and striking in the dark,
Aiming at no particular mark,
And careless whom they hurt.
The petty jealousies, the smiling hates
Shot forth their venom as they passed the plates,

And hissed and struck again, aroused, alert;
Using their feeble smartness as a screen
To shield their poisonous stabbing, to divert
From what was cowardly and black and mean.

Then I thought of you,
Your gentle soul,
Your large and quiet kindness;
Ready to caution and console,
And, with an almost blindness
To what was mean and low.
Baseness you never knew;
You could not think that falsehood was untrue,
Nor that deceit would ever dare betray you.
You even trusted treachery; and so,
Guileless, what guile or evil could dismay you?
You were for counsels rather than commands.
Your sweetness was your strength, your strength a sweetness
That drew all men, and made reluctant hands
Rest long upon your shoulder.
Firm, but never proud,
You walked through sixty years as through a crowd

Of friends who loved to feel your warmth, and who,
Knowing that warmth, knew you.
Even the casual beholder
Could see your fresh and generous completeness,
Like dawn in a deep forest, growing and shining through.
Such faith has soothed and armed you. It has smiled
Frankly and unashamed at Death; and, like a child,
Swayed half by joy and half by reticence,
Walking beside its nurse, you walk with Life;
Protected by your smile and an immense
Security and simple confidence.

Hearing the talkers talk, I thought of you. . .
And it was like a great wind blowing
Over confused and poisonous places.
It was like sterile spaces
Crowded with birds and grasses, soaked clear through
With sunlight, quiet and vast and clean.

And it was forests growing,
And it was black things turning green.
And it was laughter on a thousand faces. . .
It was, like victory rising from defeat,
The world made well again, and strong—and
sweet.

COMRADES

I STOPPED; the beckoning roads urged on in vain.
A dark, malignant power seemed to smite
The world with fearful silence, like a blight;
And earth became one dead and haunted plain.
The huddled woods, the crouching hills breathed pain.
Only the fireflies moved, their timid light
Seemed like down-hearted stars, lost in the night;
Struggling for skies they never could attain.

And then the genial moon sprang through a cloud,
As ruddy as a fat-cheeked country boy,
Spilling his mellow and impartial mirth.
I faced the Silence—and it laughed out loud
And spurred me forward, swinging hands with Joy;
Bold with the gay companionship of Earth.

WIND AND FLAME

Press with rude joy upon the world,
  Persistent Flow, resistless Spark;
Scatter your blows and torches, hurled
  With bright creation through the dark.

Leap, Wind—with such a rapture come,
  With such a clean and rushing breath,
That cries will burst from lips long dumb,
  Rousing the stagnant hosts from death.

Laugh, Flame, gay offspring of the sun,
  Whose heat is at the roots of birth;
Burn, till the dry and dead things run
  And blaze upon the blossoming earth.

Mingle your quickening powers; contend,
  Ye two great Lovers, in your love;
Struggling to give all in the end,
  And giving all—yet not enough. . .

Till, springing from that passionate strife,
Men are reborn through ecstasy—
The flame that burns the world to life;
The wind that leaps to set it free!

LOVERS

1.

WHAT had destroyed their edifice of love?
Nothing but love.
They thought they would live in it forever;
Forever secure.
They entrenched themselves behind it
As though it were a fort;
Prepared to withstand the sieges of the world.
And one day they saw there were great gaps
in the walls, the roof was caving in, even
the foundations sagged;
And they saw that the whole house was crumbling and rotting before their eyes.
For they had built only with love—
And love is not enough.

2.

When the fever abated, when the first rapture
sagged;
When the hot years cooled, and passion became
a habit,

And the fierce need for each other had passed,
Then came the fiercer call of the world, the
grappling encounter with it;
Came children and larger experiments.
And the man threw his pent-up energies into
the fight,
And went forth and came back, weary and
untiring. . .
And the wife threw herself into his arms
saying "*This* is my world!"

And the woman said, seeing the man lie down
beside her, and kiss her wearily and turn
away—and sleep,
"Surely he has grown sick of me; he desires
me no longer.
He has time for other things, but none for me.
He was so different. Where is his love?"

And the man said,
"She thinks only of herself, who was once
so spendthrift of her interests;
Like a great stone she hangs herself upon me.

In the morning I am burdened with her small
concerns, and at night her heavy kisses
weigh me down—
She was so different. Where is her love?"

So the years passed.
And they who had only love between them,
And nothing else but love,
Lost even that.

3.

"Keep us together," they pleaded, "together,
O Love.
"Our hands are waiting, eager to be tied,
And we would have your golden chains about
us forever.
Keep us together, O Love."

They wore their chains like a decoration;
They held them up boastfully for all men to
see;
They patted and jingled them like bracelets.

And one day, years afterward, when they were
bruised and beaten,
They saw, as though for the first time, the
deep grooves in their flesh;
And how they, that were once tied gladly and
with ornaments,
Were now bound with malignant fetters.

They did not gasp or cry out.
They had been far too well schooled;
Fed on stale forms and trained to soft accept-
ance,
They did not protest. But, with an infinite
amount of tact,
They smiled;
Boasting the chains that they could never break.

4.

Their love was once a fire.
A blaze that lit the world and leaped laugh-
ing to the sky.
A flame that split the heavens, threatening the
stars;

That caught up Time like a dry twig, and even
laid hold of Eternity,
Bringing it to earth. . .
Caught in the bright and quivering flood,
They were lifted and scorched, snatched up
and cleansed;
The slag of manners and breeding was burned
away from them.

Poor, fond, proper, ignorant children—
What availed them their blaze.
"It is a holy fire," they said, "and who are
we to touch it;
To feed it or do aught but be warmed by its
glamour—even when it dies down.
A passion sent from heaven and it should burn
forever.
How dare we heap fuel on it,
As though it were stuff to cook with. . ."

Their love was once a fire;
And, like a fire, it burnt itself out. . .
And often these two sit beside the gray ashes,
And wonder

Why fire cannot feed upon itself—
Nor love on love.

5.

In the beginning was the Word
" Love,—Love,"—it ran through the skies.
It fired Creation to declare itself
And brought the seed out of sterility.
It sprang from nothingness and out of nothingness it called:

" Love—love. . . .
I am come to scatter life.
I shall flood the void with lavish strength;
I shall impregnate the skies.

" Love—love. . . .
I shall sow the suns like seeds—
God shall be made from the need of me,
And Time shall reach out from my loins."

And, as the echoes of that confident singing stirred and ceased—
Time arose, groping, and stumbled into the light.

Dawn stretched its limbs and grew musical
with its own beauty.
The moon rose with a divine hesitation, and
timidly the first stars came out.
And God began creating with blundering
fingers. . .
Poor clumsy things He made; eager, pathetic
experiments—
Flinging His failures away like a petulant
child;
Amused when they turned into comets.
Then one day He made the earth—and God
saw it was good.
And with a loving, careful turn of the hand,
He set the first man in a garden, and fashioned
his mate.

* * * * *

Adam looked up at Eve; she was stretching
and yawning.
"Come," said he, "we might as well sleep.
We sit here, day after day, looking at each
other; like the animals, saying never a
word."
And Eve said, "What else is there to do?

The place seems duller every hour—
The same birds, the same hills, the never-changing vistas, the unvarying thoughts;
The tiresome greeting of the staring sun, the endless repetition of the night. . .
Everything in the world grows stale;
Except," she added hastily, " our love."
And Adam yawned assent.

* * * * *

One day, as God, with anxious, knitted brows,
Was staring past the skies, an angel plucked his sleeve.
He was a thin, important-looking seraph,
With a sharp nose and foxy eyes.
" Look, God," said he, " just look at your two people—
Isn't it terrible, the way they are behaving."
" I was afraid of this," said God,
" And yet, now it has come, I am afraid no longer."
" But look, God," almost shrieked the aroused one, his wings quivering with excitement,
" Look, she has taken the fruit—
And now she is offering it to him.

God," he cried, with meddlesome eagerness,
" Let me go down and stop them before it is
too late!"
" No," said God with a great, compassionate
sweetness,
" It is better so.
Let them have wisdom
For they have only love.
And Love is not enough."

THE ROAD

Down the long road we went,
Friends and lovers, we two.
Incredibly content,
Tingling somehow with the commonplace view;
Amazed at the heaven's most casual blue.
Sniffing the air with astonishment,
As though for the first time we knew
The sharp smell of the pine-woods blent
With the vague wild rose's scent.

Each roadside flower that ran along with us
Suddenly seemed a thing miraculous;
Translating all its magic into song.
Even their names were music; faint and strong
They flashed godspeed and called from where they grew:—
The feathery clusters of the Meadow-Rue;

Wood Lilies dancing by on feathery feet;
The swaying spires of the Meadow-Sweet.
Even the shy Sheep-Laurel looked around
To stare with deep pink eyes; while, from the ground,
Soft as the thing from which it took its name,
The Infant's Breath with double sweetness came.
And over all the mingled richness lay
The hot, sweet fragrance of the drying hay. . .

The city slipped away;
Its harshness melted as the twilight grew;
Its power was spent.
Something was walking with us, something new;
It sang the world into our hearts and sent
Our spirits dancing to where beauty lay
Over the heavens like a testament.
There was one star—and a great wash of blue. . .

Down the long road we went,
Friends and lovers, we two.

AN OLD MAID

Day after day she knits and sews,
  Waiting for nothing—yet she waits;
Hemmed in by silence, pansy-rows,
  A set of Lytton, five old plates.
There is a bird that seldom sings;
  Four "classic" prints are on the wall—
Day after day she sees these things,
    And that is all.

Great joys or sorrows never came
  To set her placid soul astir;
Youth's leaping torch, Love's sudden flame
  Were never even lit for her.
The harsh years merely made her wear
  Misfortune like a frail perfume;
It hung behind her on the stair
    And filled the room.

Tending her lilac grief with tears
  Her soul grew prim and destitute;
An empty guest-room, locked for years,
  Musty with dreams and orris-root. . .
The strengthening cares, the kindling strife
  Of living never swept her high;
For even in the midst of life,
    Life passed her by.

ROMANCE

ROMANCE with firm and eager tread
Walked at his shoulder;
He never turned his rapt, poetic head
Once to behold her.

He sought her in the skies, in dreams,
In mystic meadows;
He plunged through myths and lost her face
in gleams,
Clasping her shadows.

"It is this age," he cried, "these things
Blind and bewilder!
Weep for Romance, with frail and trembling
wings;
This world has killed her."

And still he seeks her, warm or dead—
The quest enthralling!
And still Romance, with strong and tireless tread,
Follows him, calling. . .
Calling. . .

THE WAVE

THERE was the sea again! The laughing sea,
Breathing its fresh and salty invitation;
Clapping its great, green hands and calling me
To pit my strength against its energy
And match its vigor with my own elation.
Impatiently it drummed upon the shore
And, having yearned for it a year or more,
I whipped the clothing from my eager body;
Flinging aside my threadbare thoughts, the shoddy
Fears and lethargic fancies of a day
Heavy with subterfuge and the decay
Of sophistries that only cheat themselves.
I heard the tide come racing down the sands,
Pounding a summons on the rocky shelves;
A savage welcome in its vehement roar.
I sprang out on the beach and slammed the door
As though to keep the humid world shut in.

I felt the salt winds sniffing at my skin,
The white-caps urging me with gay commands;
And, pulled along by unseen, rescuing hands,
I sprang into the water, once more free. . . .
Something had snapped the harsh, invisible
bands—
It was the sea again, the laughing sea!

Out past the life-lines where the sea grew
calm
I floated, dreaming, on a watery breast,
Of wonder with its secret unexpressed,
And beauty, singing its unwritten psalm. . .
Its healing bathed me with the balm
Of rest.

I dreamed—and then, shocked from my lan-
guid mood,
I heard new rumblings threaten and increase.
This deadening quiet was a false release;
The clouds became an evil, black-winged
brood. . .
I must escape this torpitude
Of peace.

I struck out swiftly toward the land,
Hand over hand;
Scooping at wastes of sea that flowed
Out of my reach,
Missing the silver line that showed
The beach.
I turned face downward as I tried
A shorter stroke;
The breakers flung me on my side
And broke
Over me while the spume was churned. . .
The tide had turned!

Desperate now, I threshed my arms about
In a sharp trudgeon till a burning pain
Ran through my ankles that kept plunging out.
Harder I kicked, and slower; but in vain—
The tide kept pulling, and I made no gain.
The beach was empty and my smothered shout
Fell on the thunders with no greater stir
Than leaves on warring waters. And the rain
Came with a mocking gentleness, a purr
Of protest at my struggles. Doubly dear
Though life was then, the fervor of it passed;

The leaping radiance ebbed, and even fear
No longer struck with its insistent spur.
This frantic burst of power could not last.
I felt my body slipping—slipping—and
A giant roller started toward the land,
Sweeping the ocean with it as it came
And seized me with a swift and iron hand.
I floundered in a world of cold, green flame
And drank its icy hatred; heard my name
Under the thunder. I was ground and tossed
In some malignant mill-race; light was lost—
All I could see were hands, dark hands; a score
Of whirling tentacles that lifted, tore
And pulled me down again . . . and down . . . and down. . .
I thought, is this the way that swimmers drown? . . .

Some one was lifting me; some others bore
My limping body up the reeling shore
And voices coming out of nowhere cried
"That's what a fellow gets for being brave. . ."

"The trouble is, that there's a tricky tide. . ."
"Old man, you had a pretty durn close shave. . ."

And how it happened I can never see.
All I remember is a thundering wave
That came and caught me in security
And, in a breath,
Despairing of a softer remedy,
Forced me through war and death
To rescue me.
Stinging my soft complacence into strife;
Sweeping me out of languor back to life.

THIRTEEN PORTRAITS

(For Dudley F. Sicher)

THE DEAD HORSE

ROTTING it lay beneath the affable skies;
A fecund carrion thrusting to the air
Its powerful benediction. Everywhere
About it sang a cloud of bright, green flies.
Joyfully strengthened birds began to rise;
Great, shining beetles ran, refreshed and fair,
And countless crawling things swarmed gladly there;
Called by a death that feeds and fortifies.

So, laughing, to that lively world he came:
Death, like a lover at some glorious task,
Transformed and shining through this quickening strife.
His dark disguise could not conceal the flame;
For there, behind his ineffectual mask,
Sparkled the fresh and conquering eyes of Life.

PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN

He slobbers over sentimental plays
And sniffles over sentimental songs.
He tells you often how he sadly longs
For the ideals of the dear, old days.
In gatherings he is the first to raise
His voice against 'our country's shameful wrongs.'
He storms at greed. His hard, flat tone prolongs
The hymns and mumbled platitudes of praise.

I heard him at his office Friday past:
"Look here," he said, "their talk is all a bluff;
You mark my words, this thing will never last.
Let them walk out—they'll come back soon enough. . .
We'll have all hands at work, and working fast!
How do they think we're running this—for *love?*"

PORTRAIT OF A POET

FIRE he sings of—fierce and poignant flame;
Passion that bids a timid world be bold,
And Love that rides the tempest uncontrolled,
Scorning all customs with a greater claim.
Yet, underneath the ink, his soul is staid;
Calm, even calculating, shrewd and cold.
His pain lives but in print; his tears are rolled
And packed in small, neat lyrics for the trade.

He hawks his passions of assorted brands;
Romantic toys and tinsels of desire;
Marionettes that plead as he commands;
Rockets that sputter feebly, and expire. . . .
And he is pleased and proud, and warms his hands
At the pale fireworks he takes for fire.

PORTRAIT OF A CHILD

Unconscious of amused and tolerant eyes,
He sits among his scattered dreams, and plays.
True to no one thing long; running for praise
With something less than half begun. He tries
To build his blocks against the furthest skies.
They fall; his soldiers tumble; but he stays
And plans and struts and laughs at fresh dismays—
Too confident and busy to be wise.

His toys are towns and temples; his commands
Bring forth vast armies trembling at his nod.
He shapes and shatters with impartial hands. . .
And, in his crude and tireless play, I see
The savage, the creator, and the god:
All that man was and all he hopes to be.

PORTRAIT OF A DILETTANTE

BRIGHT-EYED and chirping like a curious bird
From twig to twig, from thought to thought,
he hops.
Music, the stage, the arts—he never stops
But off he flits, hunting the precious word.
All he has read, all he has ever heard
Is but a cue for agile epigrams;
A sipper and a *connoisseur* of shams
He echoes echoes, garrulous and unstirred.

His nonchalance is proof against all hurt;
Under this shield his dapper soul is free
Of passion's terrible and sudden spears.
The world may howl; important and alert
He goes through life as through a library,
Looking for first editions of the years.

PORTRAIT OF A PATRIOT

"I do not want to speak of it," he said,
And told me that the war was a disgrace,
A blot, I think he said, upon the face
Of Progress. Man must hang his head
Each morning when he reads of men left dead
Upon the blood-soaked fields. Only one place
Preserves the high ideals of the race—
America, where bullets turn to bread.

"Why, look," he warmed up to his noble text,
"Look at this country's great neutrality;
And how we've prospered in it. If that strife
Continues through this summer and the next,
No one can tell how prosperous we'll be. . .
Just one more year—and we'll be made for life!"

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

Her husband feels her as a soothing spur,
A golden summons to a joyful strife.
Some few observe her as the careful wife
Laying two lives away in lavender.
A poet knows her as a breath of myrrh;
A tradesman as an ever-sharpened knife;
Some see the artist bargaining with life. . .
And these are but the lightest hints of her.

For she is Girl and Priestess—and her hands,
Reckless and wise, snatch at the quickening brands
And bear them like rejoicing flags unfurled.
Laughing, she scatters life; she feeds the flames
That leap through casual thoughts and tawdry aims,
And burns the slag clean from the rusting world.

PORTRAIT OF A CHOPIN-PLAYER AND HIS AUDIENCE

His fingers press upon the keys as though
  His hands were dripping thick and heavy
    sirup.
  The sweetness does not cloy; it seems to
    stir up
All sorts of greasy sentiments that grow
Maudlin and morbid. Tears begin to flow;
  Young girls breathe heavily or sob unchid-
    den;
  Matrons and spinsters dream of things for-
    bidden. . .
He piles the pathos on—*adagio.*

The concert ends. The powder-puffs come out.
A dying buzz—and people go about
  Their idleness or drudgery as before. . .
And in his taxi no one hears him say,
" I'll have to dye my hair; it's almost gray.
  There was a time they used to weep much
    more."

PORTRAIT OF A JEWELRY DRUMMER

Adventure hangs about him, like a friend;
  Romance he buys and sells on six months' time.
  In his small wallet lust and heedless crime
Come to a safe and profitable end.
Rubies, torn from the eyes of idols, blend
  With virgin pearls, fresh from the ageless slime.
  And lives and hazards, perilous and sublime,
Are this man's power—and his dividend.

The diver's death becomes his daily bread;
  The smallest of his opals burn and glow
    With all the stubborn agonies of strife. . .
We spoke of men and hardships. "Well," he said,
  "This traveling is the meanest work I know.
    Small towns and sleepers; it's a dog's own life!"

PORTRAIT OF THREE PEOPLE

MONSTROUS, misshapen, huge and unconcerned
  She sways and bulges through the oily
    crowd.
  Her heavy patience, touched with something
    proud,
Gives her a dignity she never learned.
Her path is strewn with rags and overturned
  Ruins of garbage. Dumb but never cowed
  She bears her throbbing weight, as though
    endowed
With the same fires with which the Virgin
    burned.

Near her a soldier saunters at his ease,
  Smelling of swift destruction, foul with
    strife.
    Yet he is clear-eyed, likes a bit of chaff;
There's humor in him too. So when he sees
  This mountain slowly laboring toward life,
    He nudges his companion, and they laugh.

PORTRAIT
OF A SUPREME COURT JUDGE

How well this figure represents the Law—
  This pose of neuter justice, sterile cant;
This Roman Emperor with the iron jaw,
  Wrapped in the black silk of a maiden-aunt.

TO A SELF-CONFESSED PHILOSOPHER

Is it your pride sustains you most
When other men's conceit sounds hollow. . .
"My school's the world!" you often boast
And wait for the applause to follow.

With any casual phrase, you love
To strike a noble attitude;
And with what eloquence you prove
Some stale and standard platitude!

Is there no cure for this offense
That human flesh, it seems, is heir to;
This philosophic flatulence
That all your underlings must swear to!

Is there no end to your superb
Power of rhetoric and inaction?
Can nothing shatter, nothing curb
Your sleek and smiling satisfaction?

In soft emotions you lie curled
  With all your placid creeds beside you;
And blink approval on a world
  You like to think has taught and tried you.

The world, you say, has been your school—
  But have you never contemplated,
Oh, positive and pompous fool,
  How badly you've been educated!

TO A GENTLEMAN-REFORMER

KEEP it—your torn and rotting decency,
  Your antique toga with its quaint misfit.
  Keep it; the world has little use for it,
Or swaddled truths too frightened to be free.
This is no age for sick humility,
  Or queasy goodness without strength enough
  To dare the keen and hungry edge of love,
Or fear that wraps itself in chastity.

Hide in its crumbling folds. How should you
    know
That virtue may be dirty and can grow
  Furtive and festering in a mind obscene.
How should you know the world's glad, vulgar
    heart;
The sensual health that is the richest part
  Of life; so frankly carnal—and so clean.

HAVENS

(For Jean)

HAVENS

Belovèd, let me grope and lie
In the triumphant reaches of your soul;
That singing and barbaric sky
Which is my goal.

Age cannot make the way less fresh;
And bar me if I ever dare despise
The close and friendly house of flesh
Through which it lies.

But ever slowly let me move
Through twisting roads of passion, gates of care;
And the dark labyrinth of love
That leads me there.

DRIVEN

WHAT swords have clashed between us; yes,
  What blows, forgotten and forgiven.
With what a storm of stubbornness
  We thought we drove—when we were
    driven.

Down to what wars we two have gone
  Toward peace, that cool and quiet splendor.
And must we still go fighting on
  After the ultimate surrender?

Well, let it whirl about our lives
  Through breathless days and thundering
    weather—
I do not fear whatever drives
  As long as we are driven together.

THE SLEEPERS

MOONLIGHT and music and the sound of waves
Reached out and held us there;
Each close to each,
Upon the night-blurred and deserted beach.
She sang an old, imperishable air
Softly . . . and from forgotten graves
A mist of memories arose
As if in answer to an unspoken call.
A soft and intimate breeze
Crooned over us and over all
The blue and faintly-singing spaces;
Over the quiet and the salty balm,
Over the velvet skies and seas,
Over our half-concealed and cloudy faces.
That strange and rosy wind
Mellowed the distance; smoothing down the thinned,
Sharp edges of the sickle-moon;
Bringing the night so close

That when our fingers clasped
We grasped and held its greatness and calm
Warmly within each palm.

And, as her head drooped back,
And the breath of the world came slower,
A drowsy voice grew out of the black
Night as her voice sank lower.
Something caught her unspoken word,
It answered and mingled with her;
Their breathing blended and I heard
The voice of Sleep and her sleepy voice
Singing together. . .

The wind crept up on the sands and stopped;
The voices dropped.
Our fingers loosened; the night imposed
The weight of all sleepers upon us and closed
Our heavy eyes.

Then, as we lay,
I stretched my arm into the skies
And plunged it through that shining spray,
Pushing my shoulders through the cloudy bars,
And grasped the moon like a scythe.

I flung my swaying body in a lithe
And rhythmic play,
Cutting down great, wide swathes of stars;
Reaping the heavens with a blithe
Song till the blue fields were bare.
Then, when the last gold bud was shaken free
And all the silver flowers of the night
Had rained and heaped about her there,
I threw the bright blade into the sea. . .

There was a hissing and an end of light.
And we slept—dreamlessly.

HOME

Is it a tribute or betrayal when
Turning from all the sweet, accustomed ways,
I leave your lips and eyes to seek you in
Some other face.

Why am I searching after what I have?
And going far to find the near at hand?
I do not know. I only know I crave
To find you at the end.

I only know that love has many a hearth,
That hunger has an endless path to roam,
And beauty is the dream that drives the earth
And leads me home.

VICTORIES

I.

BLOW trumpets; roll drums—
The straining banners snap and tug at their ropes;
Now the flags of my spirit leap,
And my heart is a town full of cheering.
Sing boldly, oh my soul;
Sing battle-hymns, now that the battle is over,
Sing praises and bravuras.

Long have I waited for this day. . .
Often have I said "It will come to-morrow;
And failing then, surely the morning after."
Often I thought I saw it in her looks, and then I said "At last—it is to-day!"
Often it seemed I read the miraculous news—
Her face, her talk was full of hints of it.
But they were only hints and lights and promises;

Signals that flashed through the long and
ghostly struggle
Where she was fighting grimly—and alone.

But now the clouds are rolled back;
And out of a morbid darkness,
See, she emerges.
Brightly she comes
With cleared eyes and a laughing mouth,
And hands that carry love as a child bears
flowers.
Let my songs run before me to greet her.
Sing praises, oh my soul;
Sing, as she stands there, flushed and confident,
Watching, over her shoulder, the rout of her
confused and retreating fears.
Sing—she is victorious and transfigured;
Sing—she has conquered herself!

2.

Listen, my love and my victorious companion,
Let me confess
When you came out of the struggle without a
scar,
I was ashamed.

Your rallying strength, your unsuspected courage
Were a reproach to me.
When you passed, with your hair flying like happy pennants in the wind,
Your shining spirits seemed to cry out:
"See, we have triumphed without you!"

Yet I was glad—
Glad that I had not made the fight less hard;
Glad that the old, hereditary ghosts,
By your strong stubbornness and stronger faith
Had been dispelled forever. . .
Watching you tear veil after veil and scatter them light-heartedly;
Seeing you look at last on things, not shadows and distortions;
Hearing you laugh out loud,
I knew, victorious companion,
None but ourselves can fight the battles of ourselves;
And I was glad,
Knowing your victory was real—because it was your own.

3.

May—and the rush of love
Over an eager world.
The earth, like a young bride, trembling
Under the hot hands of Spring.

May—and the push of winds
Tender, resistless and wild.
And Spring pressing close, like a lover
With gentle and conquering strength.

May—and the quivering night
Beating upon us and through us.
Hold back no longer . . . no longer. . .
Come . . . with the rush of love. . .

4.

You remember that night after they had all gone,
We went down the twisting pine-road and sat by the shore.
The beach was deserted,
The bathing-houses seemed like a row of grotesquely marching tombstones;

The sea was tumbled grass in an old graveyard,
And even the stars seemed strangely lifeless and remote.
Nothing of life was around us;
Only a weary night-bird circling disconsolate.

We seemed to be planted in sterile space,
Far off and forgotten.
Then the moon rose over the smooth sea,
Making a path on those blue-marbled waters
So straight, so substantial, it seemed we could walk on it;
And walking thus, walk out beyond the world.
Pillowed upon your soothing breasts
I lay,
Half hoping for such a calm and mystical escape. . .

How long ago it seems.
Two years—two million years from our desire.
There is no end for us now, but radiant and fresh beginnings.

We have achieved a firmer peace than death's;
Not an escape from life,
But daily, for the long and spirited encounter,
The peace that spurs, that strengthens——and
fights on!

5.

Blow trumpets; roll drums—
Give her to me, oh May, triumphant and transfigured.
Earth, like a soft-cheeked mother, shall embrace us,
And there shall be new bride-songs and holier bridals.
My arms shall be strong with rejoicings,
My love shall cry hosannas!
And heaven shall be made roomier for our nuptials. . .
Withhold no longer; no longer.
Give her to me, oh May, as though for the first time—
Mine more than ever!

JONQUILS

A HANDFUL of slender jonquils
With candid and innocent eyes—
And then, from the mists of my boyhood,
I feel it arise. . .

An evening of words and evasions,
And fingers that grope to explain;
Long looks and a longer silence,
And the hush of the rain.

Too holy for tears or for laughter,
Till—staring at us with surprise—
The wide-mouthed, incredulous jonquils,
With innocent eyes.

BACCHANAL

TAKE a sip of April,
Quaff the fiery Spring,
Till you thrill with joyous envy
Many a buried king.
Death's a giddy precipice;
Dance upon its brink—
Here is Life, a brimming goblet;
Drink!

Toss off winds and laughter,
Music and delight,
While the moon's a great pearl melting
In the cup of night.
Pour the wild libation
Gaily ere you sink;
Here's the world's immortal madness—
Drink!

JOE-PYE WEED

And the name brings back those kindly hills
  And the drowsing life so new to me;
And the welcome that those purple blossoms
  With their tiny trumpets blew to me.

Stout and tall, they raised their clustered heads,
  Leaping, as a lusty fellow would,
Through the lowlands, down the twisting cow-paths;
  Running past the green and yellow wood.

How they come again—those rambling roads;
  And the weeds' wild jewels glowing there.
Richer than a Paradise of flowers
  Was that bit of pasture growing there.

Weeds—the very names call up those faint
  Half-forgotten smells and cries again. . .
Weeds—like some old charm, I say them over,
  And the rolling Berkshires rise again:

Basil, Boneset, Toadflax, Tansy,
Weeds of every form and fancy;
Milk-weed, Mullein, Loose-strife, Jewel-weed,
Mustard, Thimble-weed, Tear-thumb (a cruel weed).
Clovers in all sorts—Nonesuch, Melilot;
Staring Buttercups, a bold and yellow lot.
Daisies rioting about the place
With black-eyed Susan and Queen Anne's Lace. . .

Names—they blossom into colored hills;
Hills whose rousing beauty flows to me. . .
And with all its soundless, purple trumpets,
Lo, the Joe-Pyeweed still blows to me!

A WINTER LYRIC

THE winter winds were swift and stinging,
The day was growing old and dark;
And yet within the icy park
Birds in the leafless trees were singing.

Somehow the cold was not so clinging,
And homing people stopped to stare
At all the brave hearts clustered there—
Birds in the leafless trees! And singing!

Yes, Spring is sweet with new songs ringing,
And Summer's pageant moves all men;
But my heart leaps to Winter when
Birds in the leafless trees are singing.

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SPRING

(A Color Print by Hiroshige)

A YELLOW raft sails up the bluest stream
And cherry-blossoms cloud the shore with pink;
The sky grows clearer with a curious gleam
And boys come playing to the river brink.

A grayish gull descends to preen and prink.
Far off, a singing plowman drives his team—
A yellow raft sails up the bluest stream
And cherry-blossoms cloud the shore with pink. . .

Oh, to be there; far from this tangled scheme
Of strident days and nights that flare and sink.

Beauty shall lift us with a colored dream;
And, as we muse, too rapt and wise to think,
A yellow raft sails up the bluest stream
And cherry-blossoms cloud the shore with pink.

THE ROBBER

I FEAR the night, the ruthless night—
It reaches down its great, dark hands
And takes the color from the day,
A world of children from their play,
And laughter from all lands.

I fear the night, the stealthy night—
It creeps up noiselessly, and soon
It robs the housetops of their gold;
It grasps the sun and leaves—behold!
That dull and leaden moon. . . .

I fear the night, the envious night—
Its jealous stars; its sharp-eyed crew. . .
Oh, hide your head upon my breast;
Or Night, that steals the whole world's best,
May see and covet you!

THE VICTOR

Bruised in the grapple with trade,
  Scourged with its merciless whips,
Love, I shall combat its strength unafraid,
  Knowing I still have your lips.

Bound to the torturing wheel,
  Sold, like a slave, in the mart,
Nothing can break me, oh love, while I feel
  Your cool hands and fiery heart.

Cries and contemptuous pain—
  War in a world of unrest. . .
Give me the battle again and again
  With the conquering hope of your breast!

TRUCE

We lay on the couch by the window, almost asleep;
Watching the snow.
She on my breast, a lovely and luminous heap,
With her head drooping low.
Except for one singing candle's flame,
And our drowsy whispers, there was no stir in the air.
And, as she smiled and snuggled closer there,
The Dusk crept up and flowed into the room.
Softly, with reverent hand, it touched her hair
That, like a soft brown flower, seemed to bloom
In the deep-lilac gloom.
Kindly it came
And laid its blurring fingers on the sharp edges of things;
On books and chairs and figured coverings,
And all once clear and delicately wrought.

Then, almost hastily,
As though with a last, merciful thought,
It covered, with its hand, the sharp, white square
That stood out in the corner where
The evening paper had been flung—
Blotting the screaming type that leaped and sung;
Hushed by no horror or shame. . .
The brutal head-lines faded; and the room
Grew softer in the gloom.

She and I on the couch by the window, watching the snow;
She half-asleep on my breast, and her fingers tangled in mine.
And still in the room, the uncertain and slow
Twilight paused with its purple half-shadows, half-shine.
Then stopped—as if seeing her it could go
No further, but stood in a trembling glow,
Like a pilgrim stumbling upon a shrine. . .

Quiet—a reverent and unspoken psalm.
Quiet—as deep-toned as a distant temple-bell

Spreading its measured calm.
Even the streets felt the beneficent balm—
The shops were golden niches, bright
With squares of cheerful light.
The people passed, wrapped in a genial spell;
Transfigured by the screening snow that fell,
Fluttering its white
And great compassionate wings,
Hiding the black world and all sharp-edged
things.
Quiet—ineffable and complete. . .
Except, far down the street,
A murmur jarring through the hush, and then
A newsboy's treble, thin and dying out:
"Extra—War News Extra . . . All about—"
And silence once again.
Closer the skies were drawn, closer the street;
And stars began to breathe again and men
rejoice,
While Beauty rose up to defeat
That boy's high voice,
With its echo and threat of a world unreal;
Too terrible to reveal. . .

And her fingers tightened in mine; slowly she
opened her eyes;
And the laugh of our child rang out, and a blue
rift broke in the skies.
And the clouds, like white banners of truce,
hung gently above,
With a promise of rest and release. . .
And the world, like a soft-breasted mother,
was an intimate heaven of love,
And a pillow of peace.

DICK

(For RICHARD
Son and Collaborator)

CONCERNING HEAVEN

WELL, Heaven's hard to understand—
But it's a kind of great, big land
  All full of gold and glory;
With rivers green and pink and red,
And houses made of gingerbread
  Like in the fairy story.

The floors they use are made of clouds;
And there are crowds and crowds and crowds
  Who sing and dance till seven.
But then they must keep still because
God and the Dream-Man and Santa Claus
  Sleep in the big House of Heaven.

God, He sleeps on the first two floors;
And the Dream-Man sleeps above Him and
    snores,
  A tired-out story-teller;
And Santa Claus, who hates the noise,
He sleeps on the roof with all of his toys—
  And the angels live in the cellar.

Now, the angels never sleep a wink,
They're much too busy to stop to think
Or play on harps and guitars.
They're always cleaning the sun at night,
And all day long, to keep them bright,
They polish the moon and the stars.

They clean the streets and they tidy the rooms,
And they sweep out Heaven with a million brooms,
And they hurry each other when they nod.
And they work so fast that they almost fall—
But God just sits and never works at all;
And that's because He's God!

CONCERNING GOD

WELL, God does nothing all day long
But He sits and sits in His chair;
His face is as silver and big as the moon,
And He wears all the stars in His hair.
He's very large and happy and He's very, very old;
And half His hair is purple and the other half is gold.

He wears no crown but a big, tall hat
With feathers three miles high;
And they have a hundred colors that are far more bright
Than all the other colors in the sky.
And they're tied to His hat with a kind of velvet rag—
And right in the middle of them all He wears a great, big American flag!

CONCERNING TRUTHS

THEY always said the moon was far away,
A hundred miles or more up in the skies.
They said he never could come down to play.
They said a lot of things that sounded wise—
But they were lies.
So when folks say the moon is dead
I do not even shake my head;
I only laugh because I know
It isn't so.

Only the other night
I watched and saw how light
He leaped down from the skies.
And then, with crinkling eyes,
That seemed to say "I'm coming,"
He danced and started humming
So gaily and so brightly
That Wendy, who sleeps lightly,
(She's our canary) woke
And scolded when she spoke.

But on he came—so near
That he could almost peer
Into my room and see
Wendy, the toys and me.
Closer he came, until
His hands were on the sill;
They stretched and tried to get
My pail, my soldier set,
And, as he touched my broom,
He jumped into the room!
I knew then right away
He had come down to play—
And so without a word,
(For mother might have heard)
Making no talk or noise,
We played with all my toys.
I never had such fun
Before with any one. . .

After a while he had to go—
I tired him, I'm afraid;
And then I knew why I liked him so
When he played.

For his face—as fat as a face could be—
Was jolly, and powdered white;
And I knew why the stars must wink when he
Laughed all night.

I saw him dancing along a wall,
And jumping lightly down—
And I knew he wasn't a moon at all,
But a Clown!

So when they tell me corn-starch makes you strong,
And sitting still is good for tired eyes;
I think that very likely they are wrong;
And lots of other things that sound so wise
Are only lies.
I think about the way they said
The moon was far away, and dead;
And then I laugh because I know
What isn't so!

CONCERNING A STORM

THE other night before the storm,
I sat and watched the rain-clouds swarm
Like great, black bees, so angry that
They buzzed with thunder. Well, I sat
And saw the wind come racing down,
Banging the shutters of the town;
Kicking the dust up in the road
And frightening every little toad.
He broke off branches for a toy,
Just like a large and wicked boy;
He threw the papers in the air,
And laughed as if he didn't care
What any one might say or do.
He roared and sang and whistled, too. . .
Well, pretty soon things got so black
There was no sky except a crack,
One little streak of funny light.
"See," father said, "just see how bright
The heavens shine behind it now—
And look, it seemed to spread somehow."

But father didn't understand
That I had seen it—seen God's hand
When, in a flash, so sharp and sly,
He tore a hole in that black sky.
I guess God must have missed my face
Behind the clouds in that dark place,
And so He made a hole to see
Whatever had become of me.
So when the space grew red and wide
And full of gold, and father cried,
"Was ever such a brilliant hue—"
I only smiled because I knew
I had been looking in God's eye. . .
Yet I kept still, till by and by,
When father cried, "The lightning, see—"
I had to laugh out loud with glee,
For it was God that winked at me!

HE TELLS A STORY

ONCE upon a time all the stars in Heaven were very good.
They played nicely with each other all day long;
They were polite to their neighbors;
And they talked in whispers whenever God was working.
But one day some of them said to the others,
"We are growing up now; we are no longer children.
Let us stop being polite and obedient;
Let us sing all day and dance all night, and kick up our heels in the morning."
So all the Naughty Stars got together in one corner of the heavens.

And they sang all day and they danced all night and they kicked up their heels in the morning.

And they made such a terrible noise in the heavens that none of the angels could sleep.
And God came to them, and he said,
"You must be a little more quiet;
I am very busy and I don't want to be disturbed. . . Do you understand?"
And they all said "Yes, sir," and kept very still.

But as soon as God's back was turned
The Naughty Stars started to sing and dance and kick up their heels;
And they made such a noise that every one of the angels had headaches.
And God heard them, although he was far away,
And he came back, very angry, and he said,
"*Will* you be still! Didn't I tell you I wanted more quiet!
The next time I have to speak to you about it, you'll be sorry.
I'll punish every one of you . . . *Do* you understand?"

And they all said "Yes, sir," and kept very still.

This time they really *were* still.
They sat in the corner of the heavens with their fingers on their lips for the longest time. . . .
But when they saw that God had gone again, the Naughty Stars forgot all about their promise.
And they started to sing and dance and kick up their golden heels,
And make such a noise that the angels ran around like mad.
And suddenly up jumped God right in the middle of them!
They were so frightened they almost went out. . .
And God began to punish them.

He said, "Because you wouldn't do as you were told,
And because you didn't appreciate Heaven,
I am going to send you out of it.
You will have to live on the earth;

And all year long you'll hide in the grass and the bushes
And be afraid to show yourselves.
Only in the summer will you shine as you used to,
And then you'll try to fly back into the skies.
But you'll never get back into Heaven for a million years;
And you'll never stop trying. . .
And that's your punishment."

And that's what happened. . . .
You can see them any evening in summer, trying to fly back into Heaven.
But they've forgotten the way they came,
Or perhaps their wings are broken, or maybe none of them are strong enough. . . .
Some people call them fireflies.
But you and I, father, know they are the Naughty Stars.

ROCKS AND OCEAN

I STOOD on the cliffs
And watched the ocean tumbling in.
It was high-tide
And the sea rumbled and roared around the rocks.
And it seemed that the rocks were mothers
And the sea-weeds were children that clung to them.

The sea leaped higher and higher,
An army of waves,
Reaching out long white hands
To tear the children from the breast of the mothers.
But the weeds clung tighter
And the rocks stood in the midst of the warring waters,
Silent and strong.

BATTLE-CRIES

"WAKE, GOD, AND ARM"

WAKE, God, and arm—this is no time for sleep;
Now that red Madness wakes ten million men,
And Murder laughs and stabs and laughs again,
And Lust runs rough-shod where it feared to creep.
Brushing Thy hand the great-winged navies sweep;
Each night sends down a hideous surprise.
Even the stars drip war . . . and swarms of flies
Blot farms and cities in one festering heap.
Where art Thou, God, these torn and shattering days?
Where is Thine ancient wrath, Thy militant word? . . .
Still. Thou are still—impotent and absurd—
A cautious god, feeble with too much praise.
Thou too, arise and arm! Why shouldst Thou be
Keeping, with Death, this black neutrality?

THE LAUGHERS

SPRING!
And her hidden bugles up the street.
Spring—and the sweet
Laughter of winds at the crossing;
Laughter of birds and a fountain tossing
Its hair in abandoned ecstasies.
Laughter of trees.
Laughter of shop-girls that giggle and blush;
Laugh of the tug-boat's impertinent fife.
Laughter followed by a trembling hush—
Laughter of love, scarce whispered aloud.
Then, stilled by no sacredness or strife,
Laughter that leaps from the crowd;
Seizing the world in a rush.
Laughter of life. . .

Earth takes deep breaths like a man who had
feared he might smother,
Filling his lungs before bursting into a
shout. . .

Windows are opened—curtains flying out;
Over the wash-lines women call to each other.
And, under the calling, there surges, too clearly to doubt,
Spring, with the noises
Of shrill little voices;
Joining in "Tag" and the furious chase
Of "I-spy," "Red Rover" and "Prisoner's Base";
Of the roller-skates' whir at the sidewalk's slope,
Of boys playing marbles and girls skipping rope.
And there, down the avenue, behold,
The first true herald of the Spring—
The hand-organ gasping and wheezily murmuring
Its tunes ten years old. . .
And the music, trivial and tawdry, has freshness and magical swing.
And over and under it,
During and after,
The laughter
Of Spring. . .

And lifted still
With the common thrill,
With the throbbing air, the tingling vapor,
That rose like strong and mingled wines;
I turned to my paper,
And read these lines:

"Now that the Spring is here,
The war enters its bloodiest phase. . .
The men are impatient. . .
Bad roads, storms and the rigors of the winter
Have held back the contending armies. . .
But the recruits have arrived,
And are waiting only the first days of warm weather. . . . .
There will be terrible fighting along the whole line—
Now that the Spring has come."

I put the paper down. . .
Something struck out the sun—something unseen;
Something arose like a dark wave to drown
The golden streets with a sickly green.

Something polluted the blossoming day
With a touch of decay.
The music thinned and died;
People seemed hollow-eyed.
Even the faces of children, where gaiety
lingers,
Sagged and drooped like banners about to be
furled—
And Silence laid its bony fingers
On the lips of the world. . .
A grisly quiet with the power to choke;
A quiet that only one thing broke;
One thing alone rose up thereafter. . .
Laughter!
Laughter of streams running red.
Laughter of evil things in the night;
Vultures carousing over the dead;
Laughter of ghouls.
Chuckling of idiots, cursed with sight.
Laughter of dark and horrible pools.
Scream of the bullets' rattling mirth,
Sweeping the earth.
Laugh of the cannon's poisonous breath. . .

And over the shouts and the wreckage and
crumbling
The raucous and rumbling
Laughter of death.
Death that arises to sing,—
Hailing the Spring!

THE VICTORY OF THE BEET-FIELDS

GREEN miles of leafy peace are spread
  Over these ranks, unseen and serried;
Screening the trenches with their dead
  And living men already buried.
The rains beat down, the torrents flow
  Into each cold and huddling cave;
And over them the beet-fields grow,
  A fortress gentle as a grave.

" Morose, impatient, sick at heart,
  With rasping nerves and twitching muscles,
We cannot even sleep; we start
  With every twig that snaps or rustles.
Sought always by an unseen foe
  Over our heads the bullets fly;
But more than these, we fear the snow,
  The silent shrapnel of the sky.

" Yonder our colonel stalks and grieves,
Meeting the storm with thoughts more stormy;
But we, we sit and watch the leaves
Fall down, a torn and crumpled army.
We mourn for every leaf that lies,
As though it were a comrade slain;
Each was a shelter from the eyes
Of every prying aeroplane. . . "

And in its cloudy uniform,
Stilling the cannon's earthly thunder,
The huge artillery of the storm
Plows through the land and pulls it under.
The rain beats down, until the slow
And slipping earth resists no more. . .
And over them the beets will grow
Ranker and redder than before.

TO A WAR POET

You sang the battle—
You, in your slippered ease.
Boldly you called for the muskets to
rattle
And bade the bugles lift to the breeze.
Glory you sang—from your couch.
With the strength of a well-filled pouch
You uttered your militant prattle;
You sang the battle.

What was your singing for,
With its twopenny craving for gore,
And its blatant and shoddy glamour
False to the core.
Evil enough is the poisonous clamor—
Why should *you* yammer
Of war?

Safe in your club or your den
You watch them go past you again;
Other than when you first sung them,
(Thankful that you're not among them)
Soldiers no longer, but men.
Men, and young boys, who were hot
with the breath
Of your ardor and noisy ferment.
Look at them now; they are broken
and spent. . .
Are you not glad that your doggerel sent
Hundreds of these to their death!

Go now—stop clearing your throat;
Drop those fat hands that smote
Your twanging and trumpery lute.
Go now, and learn from that battered
recruit
Of his jubilant sixty days!
Of the terror that crowded the dawn;
Of a fragrant and peace-breathing lawn
Turned to a roaring blaze;
Of frantic drums that blustered and beat
A nightmare retreat;

Of the sickness, the death-dealing
stenches;
The stumbling resistance, the thundering
flight,
The desperate wait and the unending
night
Waist-deep in the water-filled trenches.
Of women ravished in a gust
Of horrible, hasty lust;
And children conceived with the crip-
pling weight
Of frenzied and cancerous hate. . .
Of dusk settling down like a blight,
Screening unnamable hordes;
Searchlights stabbing the night
With blinding and bodiless swords;
Of a sudden welter of cries
And death dropping down from the skies.

What was your singing for?
This music that rose to enamor
The crowd with a clamor
It could not ignore. . .
Go—with your falsetto roar;

Go—with your ready-made glamour.
Why should you stay here to gurgle
and stammer
Of war?

THE OLD DESERTER

"Forty days . . . forty days . . . forty
days. . ."
It seemed to have been going on forever;
Not phrases, not even words—only a sound,
Like a door with rusty hinges swinging in the
wind.

Then I noticed him—the remnant of a man.
Never have I beheld a thing so smashed and
tattered as that man's face;
His sixty years or more,
With all their records, all the hard-learned,
careful craftiness,
Were nothing more than years.
Something had crushed and mangled him into
a gray pulp. . .
Could he have stood up straight he would have
towered above me.
I had to bend to hear him.

Hungry he was for talk.
He tried to hold back and be still;
But, like flooding streams breaking a puny dam,
Out of his mind rushed a mad torrent of speech.
So wild, so muttering fierce it came,
It was some time before I caught his drift—
Feeling only, like the tide in a swirling current,
His pulsing, insistent "Forty days . . . . forty days. . ."

"Forty days—that's all—just forty days. . .
I come from Pforzheim—foreman in the shop I was, too;
Head of the tool-room, a fine place, light and cool in summer.
Best machines in the country—I took care of them like children.
(You should see those mills now:—cartridge-blanks dropping where we used to press up crosses!)
Forty days . . . only forty days. . .
Forty days—just like the old times—you can read it in the Bible:

'Forty days there were of flood; forty days of fasting'—*hein?*
Yes, forty days of fools running round and stabbing other fools; and all of them praying to God to help them;
And the whole world going to smash.
I almost went mad myself.
My son (curse him!) the worst fool of the lot, went along with them,
Singing louder than a drunken man. . .
We were more like brothers, we two; we never had had a quarrel.
I could have killed him when he said "Good-by,"
And the boys in the street shouted godspeed
And a couple of women nudged each other and looked sneeringly at me.
Yah—what did I care! I wanted none of their fool's glory. . .
Then I had to clear out after all.
They made me go along.—My God, those forty days!
A hundred million acres ruined by the armies, the gray vultures!

Cannon in the wheat-fields and orchards rotting in the poisoned smoke;
The tramping, and the iron rain that never stopped, and the sickness, and the young boys going crazy. . .

And forty days ago I had been working on a draw-plate,
And the men were standing around me, gossiping at lunch-time;
And Adolph (he was the favorite) was late with the beer.
I remember how we all waited, thirsty and joking.
And Karl, my assistant, said, 'Well, I hope he don't drink *my* share. . . .'
And then he came in with the news. . .
Forty days ago . . . only forty days.
It isn't possible. . ."

I left him, still mumbling and twisting on his cot;
His filmed eyes did not even follow me.

CELL-MATES

Aw, quit yer cryin', kid—I know it's tough,
But dearie, shush; nobody's gone to lynch ye;
Later ye'll find th' cops are square enough;
It's always worse the first time that they pinch ye.

Things ain't so bad. Now there, don't take on so—
The matron won't do nothin' if ye shout, dear.
That's right . . . Now come an' tell me all ye know. . .
Ain't ye got nobody to bail ye out, dear?

Well, well—. But that's a shame. A kid so cute
An' young like youse had never ought to worry.
Gee! if they'd doll ye up, ye'd be a beaut—
Why should ye waste yer life in work an' hurry?

Oh, there is lots o' ways it could be did—
'Course I won't do this much for ev'ry-body—
I tell ye what, I'm gone to help ye, kid,
An' I've got infloonce, if my clo'es is shoddy.

S'posin' that I could get ye out o' here—
Now, now; don't take on like a reg'lar baby—
Yer pretty lucky that ye met me, dear.
What's that? No, not to-night. To-morrow, maybe.

Well 's I was sayin', when I leave this hole
I'll get my friend to go to work an' help ye—
Don't breathe this here to any livin' soul,
Fer strangers, dear, is jest the ones to scalp ye.

Now, I've the swellest little flat uptown,
An' jolly—somethin' doin' every minute!
There's always some live people hangin' roun';
Ye'll never want to leave when once ye're in it.

There's lots o' dancin'—jest ye wait an' see
The nifty rags I'll get to fit ye, dearie.
Aw, never mind the thanks—wait till you're free;
This gratitood an' sob stuff makes me weary.

Don't worry now, an' things 'll be all right;
Ye'll only see th' folks with happy faces.
There'll be no more o' workin' noon an' night,
An' standin' up all day behind th' laces.

Here's the address. Now, don't ye lose it, dear;
An' come right up—don't stop to primp or tidy.
Gee! but it's lucky that ye met me here. . .
Let's go to sleep . . . Good-night . . . an' see ye Frid'y.

LINES TO A POMERANIAN PUPPY VALUED AT 3,500 DOLLARS

Often as I strain and stew,
  Digging in these dirty ditches,
I have dared to think of you—
    You and all your riches.

Lackeys help you on and off;
  Silk's the stuff on which you're lying.
You have doctors when you cough,
    Priests when you are dying.

Wrapt in soft and costly furs,
  All sewed up with careful stitches,
You consort with proper curs
    And with perfumed bitches.

At your lightest, wheezy bark,
  Haughty women run to feed you;
Deaf to all things else, they hark,
    And, what's more, they heed you.

Guarded from the world, you grow
  Sleek and snug in pillowed niches;
You will never have to know
    Common ills or itches.

Lord, but things are queer and odd—
  Queerer still, with you to show it;
You're a lucky dog, by God,
    And you do not know it!

You don't sweat to struggle free,
  Work in rags and rotting breeches . . .
Puppy, have a laugh at me
    Digging in the ditches.

BROADWAY SILHOUETTE

Like some great flower of the night
The city blossoms into blaze;
And there is laughter and delight
Along these loud and mirthless ways.

Blazing—with flame that brightens not . . .
While all the floods that stream and spill
Themselves into this brilliant blot
Make what is darkness darker still.

YOUTH MORALIZES

(1905-1911)

(For My Mother)

TO MY MOTHER

Poor recompense to you were I to fill
This page with rhyme and rhetoric, to display
Only the poet and thereby betray
My earliest thoughts for mere poetic skill.
Poor recompense, indeed, were I to thrill
With my own music, turn to you and say,
"I give you these, my verses, let them pay
For all you gave and all you give me still."

I am too poor to buy you back the years
A mother pays for with her dreams and fears,
For I am rich in nothing but in love.
So let me live my thanks, so let me be
Forever in your debt, who gave to me
The breath of life—and all the joy thereof.

IN THE NIGHT

He struggled down the twisting road,
  Lost in the black, barbaric night;
Stumbling beneath a torturing load,
  Crying, "Alas! There is no light!"

His strength was gone; his spirit quelled.
  He stopped, and in a desperate mood
He raised his eyes . . . lo, he beheld
  The stars—a conquering multitude!

POETRY

God made the world with rhythm and
rhyme:
He set the sun against the moon;
He swung the stars to beat in time,
And sang the universe in tune.
He gave the seas their mighty tongue,
He gave the wind its lyric wings.
And the exulting soul of song
Was woven through the heart of things.

To-day this wonder was revealed
In singing colors, swift and plain.
I heard it in a daisy-field
Under the downbeat of the rain.
The surging streets repeated it,
The cars intoned it as they ran. . .
And then I saw how closely knit
Were God and Poetry with man.

A scrap of sky, a group of trees,
  A tower and a swallow's dart,
The cadence of a dying breeze,
  Like sudden music swept my heart.
A laughing child looked up and sprang
  To greet me at the homeward climb. . .
And all about me surged and sang
  The world God made with rhythm and
    rhyme.

STRANGERS

SIDE by side in the crowded train
  Two men were counting the streets;
The cars crept slowly through the rain
And the mist grew thick on the blurring pane.
Side by side in the crowded train
  Two men were counting the streets.

One thought, "Oh God, must it end in strife;
  A bitter and gasping breath?"
The other thought of the new-born life
That lay that day in the arms of his wife. . .
And the one was going to welcome Life,
  The other to witness Death.

THE MYSTERIES

THREE mysteries there will always be:
The changeless soul of the changing sea,
The riddle of God in flower and thorn,
And the mind of a child that is newly born.

And the smallest of these is the greatest still;
For the sea can be plumbed to its depths at will,
And God can be found in the loneliest wild--
But who shall fathom the mind of a child.

THE POET

His soul is like a shining glass,
A mirror, sensitive and thin;
Passions that flare and lives that pass
Through one small life are shown
therein.

It mirrors keen and careless mirth;
The love that leaps, the lure that dies;
Its depths contain the fluent earth,
The secret and immoderate skies.

Visions extravagant and pale,
The soft and sharp desires of men,
Reflecting these, each threadbare tale
Grows fresh and eloquent again. . .

His soul is but a fragile glass
Revealing what his age has been.
But it shall live, though all else pass,
For all of Time is seen therein.

THE YOUTH MORALIZES

YES, it is here;—this is the street,
And this the little house of hers.
Again my pulses throb and beat,
The sharp and curious longing stirs.
Once more the ancient fevers burn,
And rack me with forgotten pain. . .
What chance, I wonder, made me turn
My footsteps to her door again?

Nothing is changed—the hedge, the broom,
The quaint old flowers, the powdery smell;
And these, the windows of her room,
The little room we knew so well.
How many times we opened wide
That darkened lattice to the moon,
And leaned together, side by side,
And drew in all the generous June!

How still, on tiptoe, we would steal
  Breathlessly to that secret room,
Where gloriously she would reveal
  Herself in starlight, half in gloom.
Or fall asleep and hear the rain
  Beat lightly, like an eager throng
Of fairies tapping on the pane,
  To haunt us with a silver song . . .

And then—our love became a task,
  The rosy glamour turned to gray;
Faith was a masquerader's mask,
  And Life a bitter holiday.
It was the end, the acrid morn;
  Love could not hold a loveless mate.
I laughed and thought of her with scorn;
  She smiled at me with almost hate.

For we had only played at love,
  Untouched by passion, free of fears;
We never knew that pain could move
  Kindly beneath a weight of tears.
Surfeit, not grief, came to destroy;
  And only at the end we knew

That, in the very hour of joy,
Love must have tears and suffering
too. . .

And this was taught us long ago—
Yet, as I watch the moonlight play
Along the eaves, it seems as though
I had been here but yesterday.
Nothing is changed; the old lamps burn
Where once we sat and watched the
rain. . .
What chance, I wonder, made me turn
My footsteps to her door again?

A PORTRAIT

God being idle on a summer's day
Fashioned a woman arrogantly fair;
Subtle and soft, He made her seem to wear
The whole world's beauties to the world's dismay.
And, as He watched her body bend and sway,
He set the rose upon her lips to share
A milder breath than ever South-winds bear
From magic haunts to greet the languid May.

Thus He made thee, my love, with liberal care
So rich, so radiant, that from every pole
The angels came to worship and extol,
While He Himself could only sit and stare. . .
And, lost in wonder as He made thee there,
God in His negligence forgot the soul.

AN OLD SONG

O SWEET and cool is the redstart's song
As it scatters the heat;
And sweet is the whisper of winds along
A child-crowded street;
Sweet is the music when lovers rejoice,
And Song may beguile—
But sweeter still is my true love's voice
And her blossoming smile.

O soft and swift are the feet of Spring
As she dances alone;
And soft is the scent of flowers that cling
To a sheltering stone.
Light as a butterfly that dips
Through a blue abyss,—
And softer still are my true love's lips
And her silken kiss.

O wide and vast is the star-filled sky
And the starless sea;
Strong is the life that surges by,
Resistless and free;
And vast are the circlings of suns that move
To a flaming goal—
But greater than all is my true love's love
And her fiery soul.

A SINGER

If the wings of my song were so strong as to lift me from under
The rhythms and regular rhymes that are all of my skill,
Would I soar, would I rise in the fullness of power? I wonder . . .
Could I ever give up the old longing to warble and trill?

The hawk and the sea-gull that circle in confident splendor
Dazzle and thrill me; but I am no sweeper of stars.
I am one with the finch that has only her song to commend her,
The thrush or the prisoned canary, still lyric for all of its bars.

ROSES

I DREAMT I heard a dying rose
  Speak to the deathless night:
"O love, this is the tearful close
Of our impossible dreams, and those
  Desires beyond delight.
Yet ere I die, to give me rest,
Take me once more upon your breast;
Hold me a burning moment there
And kiss my lips and call me fair."

And as she spoke, I woke to weep;
  The dream dissolved in tears.
Remembered words . . . they robbed my
    sleep
And echoed still, and lived to keep
  Their poignance through the years.
I know when last I heard those words
Struggling like torn and wounded birds,
Whose cries beat on my heart like blows,
They were not spoken by a rose.

NINETEEN AND APRIL

God be praised for April weather—
All the world's carousing now;
Slipping every tie and tether,
Leaping from the winter's slough.
Earth-warm breezes faintly blowing,
Buds that dare to burst at last,
Rippling skies and green things growing
Stir me like a bugle blast.

All the pagan in me waking,
Runs to dance with feet of fire;
And my heart, a year's thirst slaking,
Seeks the well of my desire.
Quicker fly my pulses, quicker
Runs the world with naked glee;
And the tree-toad and the flicker
And the winds are one with me.

To be lying, swathed with grasses,
In some softly-stirring wood,
Where each gipsy breeze that passes
Hails my laugh of brotherhood.
Or to feel my body, slipping,
Cleave the water as I sink;
Then to shoot up cool and, dripping,
Fling myself upon the brink. . .

After all these sober ages,
Madness fresh each April brings;
What to me are strife and sages
When the first cock-robin sings. . .
I exult like one possessed, I'm
Drunken with the wine of youth.
Spring, you are the glad year's best time!
Life, you are Life's only truth!

IN A MINOR KEY

Love, when I die, your thought of me
  Shall make the earth a magic bed.
Though buried in the deepest sea,
  I shall not join the weary dead.

For you shall make me live and rise,
  Your thought shall be my blood and
    breath—
And only when your memory dies
  Will I too die—a double death.

CREATION

MAN in the making—God watched him with pride,
Striving to shake off the marks of the clod;
"How can I make him more splendid," He sighed,
"Shape him still more in the image of God?"
Then, as His thought, like a flame, lit the sky,
God turned and spoke to the angels that wait,
"Lo, he shall thrill with it, even as I;—
He shall be godly, for he shall create."

Thus was the furious measure of bliss
Kindled in men, an insatiate fire. . .
God's very joy is no wilder than this
Lust of creation, this grappling desire.
The passion that surges like wave upon wave—
Imperative travail, this hand at the heart. . .
Aye, He was God when He lavishly gave
To the mother her child, to the artist his art.

A GLEE FOR FEBRUARY

Oh, sing out a song when the nights are long
And the evening hour is chill;
When the wind goes by with a muffled cry,
And the clouds in the sky are still.
When never a bird in the land is heard,
And every voice has a rift;
When the rivers freeze and the trembling trees
Stand up to their knees in the drift.

Chorus:

Then it's hi, ho, hi, when the woods all lie
A-huddling up 'neath a freezing sky—
And it's ho, hi, ho, when the North-winds blow,
And the whole world sleeps in the deeps of the snow.

So a carol gay when the dawn comes gray
And the morning air is swift;
When the fields of white are a cheerful sight,
And the clear cold night is a gift!

When the breath of the fir and the pine-trees stir
All our days with a poignant thrill;
And the Winter's soul is a brimming bowl
Which we pledge with a whole heart's will.

Chorus:

Then it's hi, ho, hi, when the woods all lie
A-huddling up 'neath a freezing sky—
And it's ho, hi, ho, when the North-winds blow,
And the whole world sleeps in the deeps of the snow.

MARCH MOOD

HERE's Spring come again, the old harlot—
Back to her haunts again;
And the blood of the world runs scarlet
With the harsh desire, the shattering pain.
Yet—here are the same old tricks:
The smile and the side-long glances,
The stale and hackneyed romances,
The magics that do not mix. . .
The same, old stock in trade—
The blushes and airs of a maid
That flies from a bashful pursuer,
While she herself is the wooer
That will be obeyed!

Tripping the tawdry measure,
Singing her worn-out song;
She accosts you with tales of her treasure,
Glib patter of love and of pleasure;
And you, you are carried along. . .

But look at the paint on her cheeks,
It is thick with thousands of years;
And notice her voice as she speaks,
It is trembling with age, not her tears.
She is old, lad, believe, she is old—
She is hardened and bitter and cold;
A wanton that has no more fire in her soul
Than a burnt bit of coal;
A vampire that sends the blood coursing, and then
Sucks out the spirits of men. . .

But the fool is still flattered and blinded,
And the poet still babbles of bliss;
And even the wise and the sensible-minded
Are bewitched by her kiss.
And, though she is old as the Winter,
And her insolent beauty is shed,
They will clasp her and rhyme her and tint her
Till the last of her lovers is dead!

OCTOBER

On the altar of the world
All the hopes of Spring are furled;
All of Autumn's gifts are spread
Where the Summer rests her head.
Broken beauty, ravished youth,
Ghosts of passion, shards of truth,
Old desires and visions lost,—
All of these are heaped and tossed
On the sacrificial pile,
Where in majesty a while
Summer sleeps in solemn state;
Sleeps upon a wide, ornate
Bed of balsam, oak and larch. . .
Nature then applies the torch.

First a spark—then leaps among
Oak and beech a tiny tongue;
Darts of gold and tips of yellow
Touch the branches of the willow.

And the growing color spreads
Into fierce and flaming reds,
Kindling bush and brake and brier
With the surging, sacred fire.
Maple clusters all aglow,
Slim white birches in a row,
Trembling in the woodland ways,
Burst into a golden blaze.

Even slender grass and fern
Droop and wither as they burn,
While the helpless earth is lost
In this sweeping holocaust.
Now the wakened winds run free,
Swinging brands from tree to tree,
And the fire spreads until
Every mountainside and hill,
Every hedge and garden close,
In the wildest radiance glows—
Till the flames that fly unfurled
Leap and inundate the world.
And the martyred Summer lies
Burning with her sacrifice. . .

Why this immolation; why
Wrapped in flame does Summer lie,
Till the world is barren, and
Only ashes strew the land.
Is this saintly death, the birth
Of another richer earth
That will quicken from the sere
Leaves and ruin scattered here.
Does the dying Summer know
That, beneath the embers' glow,
Unborn daisies wait, and bold
Violets that dare the cold;
That from Summer's sacrifice
Spring eternally will rise.

IN ABSENCE

THE rain here has a sullen sound—
  Far off and somehow thinned
The lights are seen; and with a bound
  Up leaps an angry, baying wind.
There is a menace in the sea;
  The stars take on an insolent light;
A veil of evil mystery
  Enshrouds the blinded night.

The rain dies down, the night grows
    clear;
  The wind is hushed—and yet
The stillness wakes a baseless fear,
  The very strangeness seems a threat.
I dread this unfamiliar sea;
  The whimpering, half-human moan. . .
And I could face infinity
  Laughing with you, my own!

PLAZA SQUARE

(Late September Twilight)

Now earth and sky melt into one
  Great symphony of pearl and gray—
We bless the cool of dusk, the dun
  Departure of the fevered day;
  Happy that Summer on her flaming
    way
      Has gone.

The trees, against the shifting light,
  Become fantastic; one may trace
A screen of stars, a network bright
  Where worlds and branches interlace:
  A mystic veil across the cloudy face
    Of night.

Now it is evening; in the park
  The lights, like burning drops of dew,
Flame through the trees; and every spark
  Falls in the lake to form anew
  A web of tattered brilliance woven
    through
      The dark.

And, like an army all awry,
  With broken hopes and banners torn,
The people pass, and in each eye
  I see the joy for which they mourn—
  The unknown rapture stirs that is
    not born
      To die.

TWO REBELS

EVE SPEAKS

I

PAUSE, God, and ponder, ere Thou judgest me.
Though it be doomsday, and the trampling winds
Rush blindly through the stark and cowering skies,
Bearing Thy fearful mandate like a sword,
I do not tremble . . . I am unafraid . . .
Though the red flame of wrath lick up the worlds,
And dizzy stars fall in a golden rain;
Though, in an agonizing fear of life,
The summoned spirits, torn from gentle graves,
Whirl at Thy feet or fly before Thy frown,
Like leaves that run before a scornful breeze,
I do not fly . . . My soul is unafraid. . .

Years have swept over me and in the wash
Of foaming centuries have been forgot.
Yet still my soul remembers Paradise,
That perfect echo of Thy gentler mood. . .
Wrapped in a drowsy luxury we lived,
Beauty our food and idleness our pillow.
Day after day, we walked beneath Thy smile;
And as we wandered through the glittering hours,
Our souls unfolding with the friendly earth,
Eden grew richer to our ardent eyes.
With every step, a clump of trees, a star,
An undiscovered flower, a hill, a cry,
A new, wild sunset or a wilder bird,
Entered our lives and grew a part of us.
Lord, there was naught but happiness—and yet,
Though Adam gloried in the world's content,
And sunned himself in rich complacency,
The thought that there was something more than joy,
Beyond perfection, greater than singing peace
And tranquil happiness, vexed all my hours. . .
Here in a garden, without taint or care,

We played like children, we who were not children.
Swaddled with ease, lulled with Thy softest dreams,
We lived in perfect calm, who were not perfect. . .
Eden was made for angels—not for Man. . .
Often the thought of this would come to me
When Adam's songs seemed empty of all mirth,
When he grew moody and the reckless fire
Leaped in his eyes and died; or when I saw
Him lying at my side—his brawny arms
Knotted with strength; his bosom deep and broad,
His hands tight-clenched, his mouth firm, even in sleep.
Here was a body made for mighty building,
Here was a brain designed to dream and mould—
To waste such energy on such a life!
I could not think it. Seeing him, I knew
Man made for Eden only—not for more—
Was made in vain. . . I claimed my Adam, God;

Claimed him for fiercer things and lustier
worlds,
Immoderate measures, insolent desires;
Claimed him for great and strengthening
defeats. . .
He was but one of many things to Thee—
A cunning lump of clay, a speaking clod—
One of a universe of miracles.
Each day a fresh creation was to Thee;
Thou hadst infinity to shape and guard—
I only Adam.

Lying awake one night beneath the Tree,
I heard him sighing in a fitful sleep.
A cold, disdainful moon mocked my unrest;
A night-bird circled out beyond the wood.
Never did Eden seem so much a prison. . .
Past the great gates I glimpsed the unknown
world,
Lying unfettered in majestic night.
I saw the broadening stream hold out its arms;
The proud hills called me and the lure
Of things unheard, unguessed at, caught my
soul.

Adam was made for this—and this for him.
The peace of Eden grew intolerable.
Better the long uncertainty of toil,
The granite scorn of the experienced world,
And failure upon failure; better these
Than this enforced and rotting indolence.
Adam should know his godhood; he should feel
The weariness of work, and pride of it;
The labor of creation, and its joy.
His hands should rear the dream, his sinews think;
And in a rush of power his strength should rise
And rend and tame and wrest its secret from
The sweating, energetic earth;
Until his rude and stumbling soul could grasp
Conquering and unconquerable joys . . .
So should his purpose work among the stars;
Face, without fear, contemptuous centuries;
Meet the astonished heavens with a laugh,
And answer God with God's own words and deeds.

One thing alone would give all this to him,
One thing would cleave the sealed and stubborn rocks,
Harness the winds, yoke the unbridled seas—
Knowledge, the force and shaper of the world.
And so I knew that we should eat—and learn.

II

Into the world we went, Adam and I,
Bound by a new and strange companionship.
For in the battle with a hostile earth,
His were the victories, mine were all defeats.
His was the lust of doing: a furrow tilled,
A wily beast ensnared, a flint well-turned;
A headlong chase, a hut or trap well-built.
The joy of things accomplished Adam knew.
Was there a hunt—there was a feast for him;
Was there a harvest—there was rest thereafter;
Was Adam hurt—there was my soothing care;
Was Adam tired—there were my lips and arms. . .
Aye, Lord, though I cried out against this thing
That made me Adam's servant, not his mate,
Yet it was just—for into endless strife

My will had plunged him; therefore all the years
I tended, comforted, encouraged him
With prayers and quickening passion, till he knew
The dazzling, harsh divinity of Love. . .
God, Thou didst make a creature out of dust,
But *I* created Man. . . I was to him
A breast, soft shoulders, an impelling brain;
I was his spur, his shield, his stirrup-cup;
I was his child, his strumpet and his wife. . .
A world of women have I been to him,
To him and all the myriad sons of Adam,
And all that they remember is my shame!
All times by all men have I been betrayed—
They have belittled and disgraced my deed
That made them seek until they found themselves;
Have turned my very purposes against me,
Knowing not that I help them unawares.
Yes, I have driven them—that they too might drive;
Have held their chains—till they could tear them free;

Have ruled and urged them with a hardened
hand,
That they might find the stony world less hard.

And what was my reward when they had
won:—
Freedom, that I had bought with torturing
bonds?
Faith, that is stronger than the iron years?
Love, with a warmth that heals as well as
burns?
Or comradeship, the golden hour of love,
Clean as the candid gaze of stars and children?
Such things were not my portion. Sneers and
taunts,
Mixed with the pity of a tolerant lord;
My name turned to base uses, made to serve
A twisted symbol and a mockery.
Or was I given in some more amorous mood,
A brief endearment or an easy smile,
A jewel; perhaps an hour of casual love—
These were the precious coin in which they
paid.
And thus, to either concubine or wife,

They eased their conscience—and their throbbing lust.
They stormed through countries brandishing their deeds,
Boasting a gross and transient mastery
To girls, who listened with indulgent ears
And laughing hearts. . . Lord, they were ever blind—
Women have they known, but never Woman.

III

God, when the rosy world first learned to crawl
About the floor of heaven, wert Thou not proud!
Though Thou hast planned a heaven of suns to swing
About Thy skies, like censers whirling praise;
Though Thou hast made immense and sterile Space
Busy with life, a deathless miracle;
And now hast gathered up eternity,
Rolling it in the hollow of Thy hand,—
Was there one sudden thrill in all of Time
As keen as that fierce tugging at Thy heart,

When first the new-born world was held by
Thee
Close to Thy breast to feel its small heart
beat.
Not all the fervor of ten million Springs
Moved Thee so much, because it was so weak.
Errant and spoiled, untamed and contrary,
Thou sawest it grow, in fear no less than pride.
It was Thy pampered child, Thy favorite
star. . .
God, so it was with Adam—he was mine.
Mine to protect, to nurture, to impel;
My lord and lover, yes; but first my child.
Man remains Man, but Woman is the Mother.
There is no mystery she dare not read;
No fearful fruit can grow but she must taste;
No secret knowledge can be held from her;
For she must learn all things that she may
teach.

How wilt Thou judge me then, who am, like
Thee,
Creator, shaper of man's destinies. . .
Aye, more, I made their purpose vaster still.

Thou wouldst have left them in a torpid Eden—
I sent them out to grapple with the world!
I give Thee back Thy planet now, O God,
An earth made strong by disobedience;
Resplendent, built with fire and furious dreams.
A world no angel host could hope to shape;
Invulnerable, spacious and erect.
Not a vast garden rich with futile charm;
But streaming continents and crowded seas,
Extravagant cities, marshaled mountain-chains,
And every windy corner of the air
Filled with the excellent enterprise of man.
A world both promise and fulfilment.—See,
Men's thoughts translated into lights and towers;
Visions uplifted into stone and steel:
Labor and Life, a seething hymn of praise.
This is Thy clamorous and thundering clay;
This, Thy created, groping world—and mine. . .

Pause, God, and ponder ere Thou judgest me.

MOSES ON SINAI

ONCE more my solitudes;
Once more the quiet business of the earth.
After the savage heat,
To come to this again;
After the scorn and shouting ignorance,
To feel the comfort of the whispering grass,
The sun's concern, the smoothing little winds,
The green and silent sympathy of trees.
Here I am cool again. . .
Last week—or was it yesterday—I sat
Here, on this very rock, another man;
A disillusioned leader, a lost hope,
A doubter struggling with a dogmatist.
Laws? Were there laws enough? Too many
. . . or too few? . . .
With Nature's own commands what call was there
For me to fix and formulate?

Man was not made to live with barren laws—
And yet to live without them? . . .
At the foot
Of this impassive hill the tablets lay;
The broken fragments shining at the sun.
Was this the end of liberty, to break
And splinter at an idol's golden feet?
Had I been led to lead them all to this? . . .

Glad to escape the mill-race of my thoughts
My mind ran back to Egypt, to the fields
Where, as a boy, I saw my people working
Dumbly and in their chains.
At first I could not see their faces, they
Were turned away from me and toward the ground;
All that I saw was backs, great, oily backs
And broad and bleeding shoulders;
Arms that were made to thresh like flails
And bodies scarred with whips and lined with hate.
And then I saw their eyes—such dull and large
Pathetic eyes that showed the soul of man
Stunted into a child's by slavery.

My people! Cowed and broken in their youth!
A race of leaders stumbling in the yoke;
Ox-like, submissive—could these things be
Jews?
These, the appointed scatterers of the flame?
Something leaped up and roused me like a cry,
Tightening every nerve with one resolve—
To square those shoulders, straighten up that
back;
Send the proud vigor singing through the
blood;
To wake the kings and prophets in their bones,
To set my people free!

How slow they crept,
Those plodding years, when I ranged through
the land,
Appealing, storming, urging and reviling
At little gatherings and gaping crowds,
In markets, alleys and the open fields,
"Workers rebel! Rise and strike off your
chains!
There is no freedom till the hands are free!"
And to this rallying call they came at last,

Slowly and doggedly,—but still they came;
Night after night they met, year after year.
Singly, in groups, by hundreds, till they stood
A race of toilers strengthened by a dream,
A mighty army gathered by a word
And waiting for the word to be a deed,
To call them into action. Then it came,
The summons—and they followed like a fire,
Followed it out of Egypt, out of bondage;
A sudden strike toward liberty.

Out of the land
They walked and left the harrow in the field,
The huge stone swinging in the idle crane,
The mortar in the trough, the rusty clay
Heaped up before the buildings—left it all
And went into the desert, heads erect,
Out of the darkness toward a struggling dawn.

A while the vision drove them; they breathed deep,
Filled with the whole adventure of the flight,
The gaiety of action, the relief

Of stretching spaces after servitude. . .
And then the murmurs started, grumblings
rose;
Even the elders argued and complained:
Why had I brought them here; why had they
come
To this dry plain? What spell had made them
leave
Their clustered homes where they at least could
hear
The happy noise of trade; the pleasant hum
A city makes at night; the sound of wheels;
Or smell all day the sweet and acrid smells
Of crowded streets made pungent by the blend
Of wines and parchment, perfume, dust, and
spice.
Or let the eye grow dizzy with the blaze
Of brilliant silks, where every flaming booth
Flung out its colors like a flag of joy.
Lead us, they pleaded, back to this—
Back to the cheer and comfort of our bonds;
We are not ready for our bleak release.
A happy slave, they cried, is better than
A miserable freeman. Take us back. . .

Anger surged through me first. I clenched my fists
And swore they needed to be whipped, not led.
Unworthy and ungrateful, they should go
Back to their burdens, back beneath the yoke,
Teamed with their brother beasts. You fools, I stormed,
You cattle, you shall bellow louder still;
You shall go back to Egypt—and alone!

And then I saw their eyes again, those deep
And frightened eyes. I knew them all
For what they were—children and gropers; yes,
A tribe of children stumbling through the night.
They needed hands to help them, posts to guide
White clouds by daylight, fires through the dark.
Something to shape their desperate want—a Law!

So, on this very rock, I sat and carved
Their human need. Sharpening dull desires

To ten commandments, ten austere beliefs
That they could aim at, cling to, struggle toward.
What days I worked—choosing and cutting down,
Making a god of laws to fit their minds;
One they might grasp and cherish as their own. . .
And then I brought the tablets down the hill.

As I went down, the skies became a torch;
The world poured gold about my feet, a shower
Of sunlight turned the fields to topaz lakes
Washed with a foam of daisies; sudden rocks
Sparkled with brilliance from a thousand facets
And the whole plain shone like a yellow sea.
And what were these that danced, like bronze in motion,
The sunlight glancing from their polished thighs,
Those golden men about a golden calf,—
They were my people! . . . All the glory died,
The sunlight tarnished, and I only saw

A herd of silly tribesmen singing songs
And romping round an idol mostly brass,
Hailing the rough-cast fetish as a god.
Foolish and savage! Would they never learn!
I thundered at them, elbowed through the mob
And hurled my tablets at their shining toy.
I looked to see the idol fall—instead
It was the stone that broke; the tablet crashed
And split in fragments, scattering the laws
At their astonished feet. Was it a sign;
A symbol for the future? Could man live
Always with threatening strictures and taboos?
Or must the stony admonitions break
Upon the golden frenzy of his joy? . . .
But now the tumult ceased, the cymbals fell,
And even Miriam floating among the girls
As lightly as the moon among the stars,
Grew frightened at my frown, and ran to me,
Joining the trembling and bewildered crowd.
Some half-unconscious sense of sudden shame,
A swift revulsion from their lusty mirth
Swept them above themselves and so toward
me.
Caught between anger and astonishment

I looked at them, while youths and bearded men
Turned red and clung about my knees and cried,
"Lift up thy rod, oh Moses, we beseech,
And smite us for our sins. Give your commands
And we shall follow them and keep the Word
That drives us on with power and punishment.
Go up into the mountain and bring down
Your laws for us again."
Bewildered still,
I left them clustered meekly at the base
And started up the rocky climb once more.

II

And now—here in my spacious solitudes
With sagely nodding flowers at my feet,
And the untroubled skies above me, I am cool;
Soothed by a new and quiet confidence.
Seeing the lawless victories of the earth,
The sweet rebellion of the vagrant rose,
The calm and sweeping triumph of the grass,
The tiger's leap, the mating of the birds,

The strength of streams, the heedless laugh of winds,
And all the happy anarchy of life,
I saw the world held in compassionate hands;
And in its singing beauty I could feel
The great beneficence that stirred it all.
I knew that Life was good—and needed nothing more. . .

And yet these laws: my people needed them
For they were children still, the loosened bonds
Had freed their hands, but not their hearts;
Their souls were yet in bondage, yet enslaved;
They still were chained to lust and apathy,
Chained to a wheel of fantasies and fears,
Chained to themselves. They were not ready for
The blaze of freedom with its fierce white light.
There should be strengthening struggle; they must learn
Control before they could go uncontrolled.
Doubt and disaster first, before the time
When every man may take the old commands
And break them lightly as a hoop of straw;

When men can walk upright and hand in hand
With their desires, fearless, frank, and high;
True to their own ennobled impulses.
Obedient only to the law of Beauty,
Growing as clean and freely as a tree;
Sharing the mandates heeded by the sun,
And kept, in splendor and authority,
By all the tides and every rushing star.

The time would come—but not for those alive.
Meanwhile—the Law. . .
Here is a smooth, flat stone.
It takes the chisel nicely and the words
Will stand out bright and boldly. To begin:
I am the Lord thy God, which have brought
thee
Out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of
bondage. . .

REVEILLÉ

What sudden bugle calls us in the night
And wakes us from a dream that we had
shaped;
Flinging us sharply up against a fight
We thought we had escaped.

It is no easy waking, and we win
No final peace; our victories are few.
But still imperative forces pull us in
And sweep us somehow through.

Summoned by a supreme and confident power
That wakes our sleeping courage like a blow,
We rise, half-shaken, to the challenging hour,
And answer it—and go. . .

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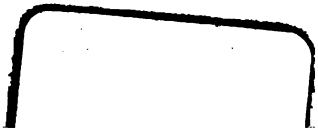
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